



Virginia Asian Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 18, 2021
1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
VirtualWebEx Meeting

Video Conference Information:

Meeting link:

<https://covaconf.webex.com/covaconf/j.php?MTID=m8159d99512b9d820180bee89bcd279f>

Meeting number: 185 638 3793

Password: Northam21

In Attendance:

Virginia Asian Advisory Board Members: Mr. Tae Aderman; Dr. Melody Agbisit (Secretary), Ms. Suja Amir (Vice Chair); Ms. Laura Beldin; Mr. Paul Chhabra; Ms. Julia Chun; Dr. Nina Ha; Mr. Razi Hashmi; Ms. Hyun Lee; Mr. Justin Lo; Mr. Bao Ly; Mr. Praveendharan Meyyan; Mr. Patrick Mulloy; Ms. May Nivar (Chair); Ms. Carla Okouchi; Dr. Marie Sankaran Raval; Mr. Ssunny Shah; Ms. Da Lin Sheth; Mr. Jewan Tiwari; Mr. Pient Tran

Governor's Office Staff: Dr. Ralph Northam (Governor); Ms. Suzanne Holland (Special Assistant for Advisory Board Administration); Mr. Shawn Soares (Director of AAPI Outreach); Ms. Traci DeShazor (Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth)

Legal Council: Mr. Justin Bell (Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General, Commonwealth of VA)

Guests: Ms. Kelly Thomasson (Secretary of the Commonwealth); Ms. Courtney Dozier (Policy Director); Dr. Danny Avula (Director, Richmond Health District, Virginia Department of Health); Jenny Glass (ACLU VA); Ms. Danielle Campbell; Ms. Jess Nguyen (President, VT Asian Club); Ms. Kwanza Downs (ACLU VA); Mr. Patrick Larsen (VPM NPR News); Ms. Rose Minor (Director, LGBTQ+ Outreach); Ms. Mona Siddiqui (Deputy Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer); Ms. Shannon Dion (Director of the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services); Ms. Salinna Lor (Constituent Services and Community Engagement); Ms. Angela Chiang; Mr. Atif Qarni (Secretary of Education), Ms. Claire Gastañaga; Dr. Janice Underwood (Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer), Ms. Maribel Castañeda (Director, Appointments); Mr. Mark Herring (Attorney General of Virginia); Ms. Pam Kestner (Chief Deputy, Department of Housing & Community Development)

1:01 p.m. Welcome and Call to Order, *May Nivar, Chair, Virginia Asian Advisory Board*

- Meeting Overview
- Moment of Silence for the lives lost in Atlanta this week and for all of our Asian brothers, sisters, our elders whose lives have been lost and shattered by racism, bigotry and discrimination.

1:05 p.m. March Meeting Minutes Approval and Agenda Adoption, *Melody Agbisit, Secretary, Virginia Asian Advisory Board*

Approval of Minutes:

- **Changes:** Spelling of Ssunny and deputy
- **Moved to Approve:** Ms. Carla Okouchi; Second: Ms. Julia Chun
- **Voting in Affirmation:** Mr. Tae Aderman; Dr. Melody Agbisit (Secretary), Ms. Suja Amir (Vice Chair); Ms. Laura Beldin; Mr. Paul Chhabra; Ms. Julia Chun; Dr. Nina Ha; Ms. Hyun Lee; Mr. Justin Lo; Mr. Bao Ly; Ms. Hyun Lee; Mr. Praveendharan Meyyan; Mr. Patrick Mulloy; Ms. May Nivar (Chair); Ms. Carla Okouchi; Mr. Ssunny Shah; Ms. Da Lin Sheth; Mr. Jewan Tiwari; Mr. Pient Tran
- **Voting in Negative:** None
- **Voting to Abstain:** None
- **No Vote:** Mr. Razi Hashmi; Dr. Marie Sankaran Raval

Approval of March Agenda:

- **Voting in Affirmation:** Mr. Tae Aderman; Dr. Melody Agbisit (Secretary), Ms. Suja Amir (Vice Chair); Ms. Laura Beldin; Mr. Paul Chhabra; Ms. Julia Chun; Dr. Nina Ha; Ms. Hyun Lee; Mr. Justin Lo; Mr. Bao Ly; Ms. Hyun Lee; Mr. Praveendharan Meyyan; Mr. Patrick Mulloy; Ms. May Nivar (Chair); Ms. Carla Okouchi; Mr. Ssunny Shah; Ms. Da Lin Sheth; Mr. Jewan Tiwari; Mr. Pient Tran
- **Voting in Negative:** None
- **Voting to Abstain:** None
- **No Vote:** Mr. Razi Hashmi; Dr. Marie Sankaran Raval

1:10 p.m. Public Comments, *Melody Agbisit, Secretary, Virginia Asian Advisory Board*

- **Jenny Glass (ALCU Virginia)-** Made Statement about recent murders. Example of inhumanity against women and AAPI which started rising during Covid Pandemic. Struggle interconnected with all human rights. Encouraged to keep on fighting. Partnered with NAKASEC. Continuing failure by language barriers. Asked to take civil action.
- **Announced their presence:** Danielle Campbell; Jess Nguyen- president with VT Asian Club; Kwanza Downs-ACLU VA; Patrick Larsen-VPM NPR News

1:23 p.m. Chair's Report *May Nivar Chair, Virginia Asian Advisory Board*

- Call to action due to Atlanta area shooting. We need more action with the community and government. We need to be seen, heard, and taken seriously. We need to take a stand to be anti-racist, which is to be against all forms of racism.

1:25 p.m. Open to Comments

- **Ms. Suja Amir (Vice Chair)-** Racism and radicalization against Asians is not new. We did not acknowledge and advocate for Muslims after 9/11 which minimized lives that were lost and those dealing with hate crimes. 9/11, Vincent Chin, etc. still needs to be addressed.
- **Mr. Justin Lo-** Shared that he is encouraged in times like these and reminded us how important it is to have a community of AAPI. We have a tendency of doing things by ourselves, but we need to get together with the community and partner with as many AAPI as possible.

- **Ms. Carla Okouchi**- Shared that she wants to lift up all AAPI and acknowledge the trauma we share. Made a call to action for others to check in and stand up because it is time to address and eradicate the hate. We need to include our histories in textbooks.
- **Mr. Patrick Mulloy**- Shared his empathy and deep sorrow with the Asian American community. He assured us that it doesn't represent most American values.

1:33 p.m. Board Administration Update *Suzanne Holland, Special Assistant for Advisory Board Administration*

- **Utilize Contact Information**- VAAB@governor.Virginia.gov and facebook.com/virginiaasianadvisoryboard
- **Next VAAB Board meeting**: Thursday, June 3rd and May 25th and 26th for committee meetings
- **Legislative Bills**: Lis.virginia.gov
- **For Covid Vaccine Updates**: Vhd.virginia.gov
- **Timeline for annual report**-
 - January-April: Subcommittee Meetings- Updates on last year's recommendations
 - April-June- Develop Annual Report and Recommendations
 - Finalize draft of annual report by June
 - Aug-September- Submit report
 - Oct-Nov- Meet with governor
- **Recommendation Considerations**: This is the Final year of the Northam Administration, the recommendations may take time to take into fruition. Think about other types of recommendations like outreach solutions, administrative actions, and direct board initiatives.

1:40 p.m. AAPI Outreach Update *Shawn Soares, Director of AAPI Outreach*

- Acknowledged how hard it's been in the AAPI community with anti-Asian hate crimes. Encouraged us to stand in solidarity with each other.
- **VA Covid-19 website**- centralized system, call center, English and Spanish and 100 languages for call back. Need ID but doesn't need immigration status. Free vaccine.
- **VA Rent and Relief Program**- Distributed \$83.7 million in housing aid. \$524 million in new funding. New Eviction programs- addressing Hampton Roads and Richmond
- **Voting Rights**- Policy recommendations based on report on systemic bias- New measures to restore voting rights to prior convictions, address laws that directly address inequity.
- **One-VA Plan**- First strategic plan to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. Support more than 100 state agencies, all levels of government
- **Key dates**- 2021 outreach and engagement- Lunar new year, Nowruz new year, Ramadan (Office of the First Lady), AAPI Heritage Month- will collaborate with committees, increase engagement with Facebook page
- **VA State Boards**- Need AAPIs on all boards not just VAAB

1:51 p.m. Administration Update: *Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth*

- **AAPI Heritage Month**- How can we celebrate in a safe and healthy way?

- **Voting Rights**-Changed eligibility criteria for restoration of rights to restore rights when they return to their communities. Restored rights to 69k people.

1:58 Open to questions

- **Mr. Justin Lo**- Question for Shawn: Does the One VA include increased representation for AAPI?
- **Mr. Shawn Soares**- Answered that it covers branch of all marginalized groups.
- **Ms. Mona Siddiqui**- DEI plan doesn't specify race and ethnicity. Barriers and challenges due to migration are referenced in plan.
- **Ms. Kelly Thomasson**- Make sure AAPI is represented in all our boards, health, safety, boards

2:15 p.m. Update on Policy Recommendations: *Courtney Dozier, Policy Director, Office of the Governor*

- Bill reviews until the end of the month.
- Small Business Relief; Marijuana- bill is being reviewed; G3 Job Program- partnered with community colleges; Financial aid for undocumented students; Need Transparency on the parole board; Food insecurity; Expanding access on health care- Medicaid; Health equity; maternal health outcomes

2:25 p.m. Break

2:30 p.m. Remarks to Virginia Asian Advisory Board, *Ralph S. Northam Governor of Virginia*

- Expressed solidarity and support for the AAPI community. Expressed sadness and mourning for the Atlanta shooting. Committed to making it clear that hate and bigotry is not accepted here and that we need to start teaching this to our children (early childhood).

Comments

- **Ms. May Nivar**- Challenged Governor to hold forum to listen to AAPI voices, and include AAPI in reporting and infrastructure. Stated that we want to see you in our communities, places of worship, and businesses.
- **Ms. Suja Amir**- Shared that AAPI was disproportionately impacted because we are a large part of the health workforce. We need to see what the impact is for the communities and workforce. We need vaccination events for elderly at houses of worship.
- **Governor Northam**- Shared that action is needed on different fronts: mental health, early childhood, hate crimes, workforce, need to listen to people. Assigned Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth Traci DeShazor to set up listening tour/press conference around the state.
- **Traci J. DeShazor**- Committed to seeing and listening to the needs of AAPIs. Considerations mentioned: partnership, safety, needs, dates, and who needs to be heard.

2:45 p.m. COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach Update *Dr. Daniel Avula, Director, Richmond Health District, Virginia Department of Health and Traci J. DeShazor, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth & COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach Director*

2:45 Traci J. DeShazor, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth & COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach Director

- **Shared Vaccine roll out plan** to develop strategic and comprehensive community outreach and engagement. Used Health 360 and Census data to identify vulnerable populations. Implementation goal- engage, educate, empower, and enable. Strategically work with community leaders, faith leaders, big business (Walmart, Dominion), and community needs for vaccination sites.
- **Call to action-** recruit community leaders to discover the needs, who to partner with, where to set up the clinics, and communication ambassadors. Community vaccine vaccination centers- Danville, Portsmouth, Petersburg, turnkey events or clinics.
- **Challenges-** language accessibility- websites, document translation, accessibility with call center, some challenges are difficult to maneuver (operationally and mechanically); deepening engagement; connecting with Asian businesses.
- **Contact information for Vaccine Outreach Opportunities**
 - **Email:** employment@educatevaccinate.com
 - **Website:** covidcommunityambassadors.com
 - **Recruiting and Hiring Community leaders:** 833-577-1919

3:17 Dr. Daniel Avula Director, Richmond Health District, Virginia Department of Health

- **Vaccine Update:** Shared that over one million Virginians are fully vaccinated. Getting a large supply of vaccines at the end of March. Most of the state is in 1B, some are in 1C criteria. Need help to reach the State goal of 75%. Language accessibility- Citizens may request call back in 100 languages.

Comments

- **Dr. Melody Agbisit** asked what are the languages they can assist with?
- **Dr. Avula** shared that he will email the list of 100 languages
- **Mr. Pient Tran** asked what are the barriers to vaccinate the last the 10%?
- **Dr. Avula-** The barriers are vaccine hesitancy population- young people, white males identify as Republican. Black and Hispanic hesitancy has dropped.
- **Call to action-** Take the time to help people understand why vaccines are important for non-English speaking people.
- **Ms. Carla Okouchi-** Will there be "drive up" events for our AAPI communities who no longer feel safe?

2:04 p.m. Administration Update: Mona Siddiqui, Deputy Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer

- Announced her standing with the Governor on his stance against racism.
- **One Virginia Plan-** empowers agencies to embed diversity into organization so all feel welcomed. Hired Kimberly Cain from DEI at ODU for her subject matter expertise. Will start with leadership retreats at the top and work itself down.
- **Website:** <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/diversity/one-virginia/>
- Launched vaccine events in underserved communities, finding solutions for language barriers, locations

Comments

- **Ms. May Nivar** asked, When the plan gets put into place, middle management tends to have a hard time- what plans/conversations do you have to make sure this doesn't happen?
- **Ms. Mona Siddiqi**- Shared that the goal is to do a systemic change and break down that wall. Embedded in plan is the accountability measure- public, annually reviewed, ongoing evaluation.
- **Mr. Justin Lo** asked, Can the information be used (accountability measure) or available to look at and study?
- **Ms. Mona Siddiqi** shared that the plan is available to the public and thinks it will be able to be used but she doesn't know exactly what it will look like.

3:07 Update from *Shannon Dion, Director of Dept of Criminal Justices*

- **Active attack training program**-Developed a free program to teach citizens about what to do in active attacks. The program is 4-hour in person and recently pushed out a 2-hour virtual one. The program mentally prepares people with medical skills and confidence. Free.
- **Call to action**- Needs help connecting with community groups.
- **Contact Information**- shannon.dion@dcjs.virginia.gov; (804) 314-6230
- **Website**: <https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/civilian-training>

Comments

- Ms. Julia Chun asked, who makes the determination of if an attack is race based?

3:35 p.m. Break

3:34:45 p.m. Committee Reports (5-7 minutes each)

3:46 Business & Trade Committee

- **Mr. Praveendharan Meyyan**- Shared that their committee reviewed their recommendations and count that programs took into consideration their recommendations. They will continue to look into bilateral agreements, language access needs. Sunny is looking into where community needs are and setting up education centers. Paul shared that AAPI needs to know new tax rules and deductions available through relief act. There is a ride in anti AAPI sentiment in AAPI businesses. Need a better relationship with AAPI and law enforcement (unreported or lack of cooperation, training). Need to expand listening tour to target specific issues such as licensing.
- **Mr. Pat Mulloy** shared that with the WTO Government Procurement Agreement, it is open to anyone. Trade tensions with China are rising and we need to make sure the cost doesn't get passed to citizens.
- **Mr. Bobby Ly**- Shared that the Eden Center is experiencing violence and attacks. He asked, "How do we communicate that the police are with them?" He said that the police tried to engage, but the community doesn't respond.

3: 57 Civic Engagement Committee

- **Mr. Justin Lo** shared a report from the Institute of Social Policy and Understanding that focused on a case study of the Muslim Community. One finding was that we need representation in all boards. Met with Shawn Soares to build outreach efforts- stakeholder directory, religious organizations, cultural organizations, and community centered events to make more targeted community outreach. Met with Middle Ground Initiative Panel Discussion with Student Leaders on mental health impact.
- **ISPU Report** <https://www.ispu.org/strategies-to-increase-effective-political-engagement/>

5:05 Education Committee

- **Ms. Carla Okouchi-** Shared that the bulk of their discussion was around Real Talks. Committee is hosting a diverse panel discussion integrating Education, mental health, anti-Asian, bullying, and workforce issues.

Health Committee

- **Dr. Melody Agbisit** shared that they continue to explore language access issues, explored barriers to PPE distribution and donation, need to explore health workforce issues, explored MH issues in AAPI (suicide, mass shooting training, resources). Committee will collaborate with Education committee and Shawn Soares for MH Awareness and AAPI Heritage Month.

4:03 Update from *Secretary Atif Qarni, Secretary of Education*

- **Secretary Qarni** Shared that the Atlanta events are unfortunate and part of our history. Need to have a monolithic approach in fighting against AAPI violence. Need both short and long term efforts. Instead of asking folks for what they can do, tell them, “this is what I want.” Need to focus on going out to religious institutions. Need more AAPI in DOE. AAPI puts in hard work and talent but don’t become deans or administration. It is damaging when Asian Americans say that there aren’t hate crimes. Need to educate democratic circles as well.

4:10 p.m. Board Discussion: Anti-Asian Hate Crimes, *Mark Herring Attorney General of Virginia*

- **Attorney General Herring** shared that the goal is for AAPI to feel a part of our community and empowered. Hate crimes have roots in white supremacy. We need to push back on the hate, and we cannot let it slide. Pair words with actions. Action did not get support several years ago, but is getting support now. Shared NoHateVA resources updates and mentioned that anti-Hindu hate crimes occurred in 2015 and that there was an increase in hate crimes in 2016.
 - **No Hate VA Initiative:** <https://www.oag.state.va.us/programs-initiatives/no-hate-va>
 - **Atty. General Website:** <https://www.oag.state.va.us/14-initiatives>

Comments

- **Ms. May Nivar** shared that there is no reporting infrastructure to capture information. Police are supposed to track hate crimes. But hate crimes are underreported in the AAPI community for the tendency of being suspicious of law enforcement, and culture to 'tough it out'. We need cultural competency to build trust, but need to know that something will get done. Hate crimes need to be labeled because they strike fear in the entire community.
- **Call to action-** Governor needs to host anti-racism public safety forum, Secretary, VA state police, FBI, business owners. Assign a hate crime unit within the VA police. Create Hate Crime Task Force, website, better data, better infrastructure, and multi-lingual support.
- **Mr. Justin Lo** asked How do you establish hate crimes when it is difficult to prove?
- **Atty. General Herring** shared that sometimes they don't charge as a hate crime because they want to make it so that the primary crime is punished. Not being a hate crime loses confidence from the community. They find a lot of evidence on social media, reasonable inferences. Need public education to teach about hate crimes so that juries will be educated.
- **Ms. Suja Amir** shared that the message about the gunman having a bad day from the public face of law enforcement is problematic. Widens divide between AAPI and police. Police need accountability.
- **Atty. General Herring** agreed that it is problematic and that police need to stand with communities. Wider community is standing with solidarity.
- **Ms. Linda Sheth** asked, "what is your office doing to prevent racism?"
- **Atty. General Herring** shared that they are speaking out and they have new tools to go after white supremacists and other tools such as tools centering around gun violence.

4:44 p.m. Housing Resources: Rent Relief Program Update *Pam Kestner Acting Deputy, Department of Housing & Community Development*

- **Ms. Pam Kestner** extended condolences to the AAPI community.
- **VA Rent and Mortgage Relief Program Update-** Relief does not include mortgages. But new plan by President Biden includes mortgage relief in the future. Can seek help via landlord and tenant. 21k households served, \$83 million. Small portion are AAPI. Do not need to be documented.
- **Eviction Reduction Pilot Program-** \$3.3 million in funds. Aim to prevent evictions. Households can access resources before they are late.
- **Rental Relief Website:** virginiahousing.com/rentrelief

Comments

- **Ms. Julia Chun** asked if non-renewable notice is a way around evictions. And is that legal? **Ms. Kestner** shared that it is legal. Landlord doesn't need to renew a lease.

5:09 Open Comments

- **Mr. Razi Hashmi** expressed condolences to AAPI members and Muslim communities for solidarity. Signed a letter to national security experts. Asked for more police presence in mosques during times of copycat incidences. Prevention and protection first.
- **Ms. Julia Chun** shared that maybe we need to revive the anti-Muslim subcommittee.

- **Ms. May Nivar** shared that we need to contact representatives, police, and raise the issue. We need a taskforce. It is time to demand but we also need to be sensitive and do it the right way.
- **Dr. Nina Ha** asked what about an intersectional taskforce. She shared concern for increased police presence.
- **Ms. Suzanne Holland** shared that all boards have cross board meetings

5:25 p.m. Closing Remarks and Adjournment May Nivar Chair, Virginia Asian Advisory Board